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Summary record of the 22nd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 5 November 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Argüello ..... (Argentina)
later: Mr. Elsherbini (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Egypt)
later: Mr. Argüello (Chairman) ..... (Argentina)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 32: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/63/21 and A/C.4/63/L.8)

Draft resolution A on information in the service of humanity (A/63/21, chap. IV)

1. **The Chairman** said that draft resolution A had no programme budget implications.

2. *Draft resolution A in document A/63/21, chapter IV, was adopted.*

Draft resolution B on United Nations public information policies and activities, and the draft decision on increase in the membership of the Committee on Information (A/63/21, chap. IV, A/C.4/63/L.8)

3. **Mr. Blair** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that two new paragraphs, 78 and 79, should be inserted after existing paragraph 77 of draft resolution B. The remaining paragraphs should be renumbered accordingly. Paragraph 78 underscored that the Department of Public Information should identify the practical improvements intended by the change from the *UN Chronicle* to "UN Affairs" and should place emphasis on cost-effective measures; while paragraph 79 highlighted the need to continue publishing the *UN Chronicle* until a decision was taken on an alternative publication. The footnote stated that there were no programme budget implications.

4. **Mr. Zhang** (Secretary of the Committee) said that neither draft resolution B, as amended, nor the draft decision contained in A/63/21 had programme budget implications.

5. **Mr. Blair** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and in explanation of position, said that the intention of the draft resolution was to bring about a more effective Department of Public Information. Consensus had not yet been reached on the transformation of the *UN Chronicle* into a journal called "UN Affairs"; however, any change in that regard should meet, in full, the criteria of parity of languages. Furthermore, the Department should outline a concrete editorial policy on "UN Affairs" to provide guidance to contributing authors and to safeguard the interests of the United Nations and Member States. Meanwhile, the Department should strengthen the content of the *UN Chronicle*.

6. *Draft resolution B, as amended, and the draft decision in document A/63/21, chapter IV, were adopted.*

Agenda item 27: Effects of atomic radiation (*continued*) (A/63/478 and A/C.4/63/L.9)

Draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.9 on effects of atomic radiation

7. **Mr. Zhang** (Secretary of the Committee) said that draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.9 had no programme budget implications and announced that the following countries had also become sponsors of the draft resolution: Armenia, Greece, Kazakhstan, Monaco and the United Kingdom.

8. **Mr. Bowman** (Canada), introducing the draft resolution, said it was very similar to the resolutions adopted in the past. Its main purpose was to renew the mandate of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and it therefore included an ambitious future programme of work. Several countries had expressed interest in becoming members of the Scientific Committee and the draft resolution addressed several of the issues involved: the need for additional resources; the need to take into account the concerns of current members that an expanded membership would not hamper the Committee's efficiency; and the extension of the observer status of the six candidate countries for a further year. Complex negotiations had been held on the issue of increased membership and paragraphs 15 to 17 reflected the compromise reached in that regard.

9. **Mr. Tretyakov** (Belarus) said that his delegation was in favour of strengthening the activities of the Scientific Committee as the main intergovernmental body for the assessment of radiation safety in a global context. Given the shortage of financial and human resources highlighted in the Secretary-General's report, the priority was to ensure that the Scientific Committee had sufficient qualified staff and that its executive mechanism could function efficiently and effectively. In addition, strict budgetary discipline should be observed, the available resources should be redistributed more effectively, the deployment of the financial and human resources allocated to the Scientific Committee's secretariat should be monitored

on an ongoing basis, and end results should be evaluated.

10. His delegation had doubts about the development of evaluation criteria based on States' scientific and practical contribution to the work of the Scientific Committee and the attendance of national experts at its sessions. The importance of stability in the Scientific Committee's activities should not be underestimated. Such evaluation criteria could give rise to complaints and controversy. It would be more appropriate to have a constructive discussion of ways to eliminate possible flaws in the process of selection of national experts, so as to ensure that the Scientific Committee's membership was made up of world-class professionals. However, no suitable solution had yet been proposed. The General Assembly should consider future proposals from the Scientific Committee for the introduction of evaluation criteria for States on the basis of further comprehensive and critical analysis and a cautious approach, taking into account more general objectives and priorities for strengthening the Scientific Committee's activities.

11. Expansion of the Scientific Committee's membership had been the subject of ongoing consideration by the General Assembly for the past decade, and States Members had adopted no less than five different resolutions reflecting almost all aspects of the impending inclusion of new members. His delegation was encouraged that the current draft resolution set out a procedure for the acceptance of candidate countries as full members and was convinced that the completion of the process would help to enhance the Scientific Committee's authority and the effectiveness of its activities.

12. **Ms. Parviainen** (Finland), speaking in explanation of position, said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/63/478) clearly showed that additional funding was needed to allow the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation to fulfil its mandate. The work of the Scientific Committee was highly appreciated and the need for new resources was undisputed. She therefore urged the Secretary-General to make the necessary allocation in the programme budget for the biennium 2010-2011, which would enable the Committee to extend full membership to the six observer countries, including Finland.

13. **Ms. Pessôa** (Brazil), speaking in explanation of position, said that her country fully supported the Scientific Committee and the view that the current critical financial situation should be addressed before taking any decision on the expansion of membership. Her delegation regretted that the Secretary-General's report (A/63/478) had been released only after the Fourth Committee had considered agenda item 27 and trusted that a precedent had not been created. Indeed, because of the late circulation of the report, it had not been possible to examine it thoroughly prior to consultations on the draft resolution. While recognizing the efforts made by the coordinators to facilitate consultations, it was regrettable that no flexibility that would have enabled full consensus on the final draft had been shown. Therefore, her delegation had refrained from sponsoring the draft resolution, which in no way detracted from its support for the Scientific Committee and its crucial work or from the recognition that it urgently required additional resources. Her delegation would not oppose the adoption of the draft resolution, but wished to put on record its understanding that the criteria for membership, mentioned in paragraph 17 would be in keeping with the Scientific Committee's mandate and aims, and based on the ability of Member States to contribute actively to its work. Furthermore, such membership criteria should take into account the need for equitable geographic representation and seek to secure the participation of scientists from developing countries.

14. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan), speaking in explanation of position, said that his country had become a sponsor of the draft resolution as an expression of its support for the work of the Scientific Committee. As one of the six observer States, it understood that the decision on membership for those States merely related to the allocation of adequate resources.

15. *Draft resolution A/C.4/63/L.9 was adopted.*

Agenda item 110: Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/C.4/63/L.10)

Draft decision A/C.4/63/L.10 on proposed programme of work and timetable of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) for the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly

16. *Draft decision A/C.4/63/L.10 was adopted.*

Agenda item 30: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/63/273, A/63/482, A/63/483 and A/63/484)

17. **Mr. Natchiappan** (India) said that the human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan continued to deteriorate. Israeli military action was causing significant injury and loss of life, as well as damage to infrastructure. In addition, access restrictions, settlement expansion, the continued construction of the separation wall, the isolation of territories, the interruption of fuel and water supplies and continued violence against civilian populations were leading to economic hardship and alienation, which in turn created fertile ground for extremism and provoked an ongoing cycle of violence.

18. The report of the Special Committee (A/63/273) highlighted the failure to raise the human rights standards of the population in the occupied territories in nine essential areas. Measures must therefore be taken by all parties, beginning with the Government of Israel, which must end the confiscation of Palestinian land, restore freedom of movement for Palestinians and ensure respect for international law and the principle of appropriate use of means and methods of warfare. Similarly, mass arrests, arbitrary detentions and the curtailment of basic services must cease. The expansion of settlements, especially over the past year, was particularly worrying. Israel must abide fully by its commitments under the road map. All Palestinian parties must do likewise, and the Palestinian Authority must restore the rule of law in areas under its control. He also welcomed efforts by States in the region to address the divisions in Palestinian society.

19. India unequivocally condemned all acts of terrorism, provocation and incitement to violence. Equally, it had always criticized harsh and disproportionate retaliatory measures and measures that adversely affected whole communities. It exhorted all parties to exercise utmost restraint and carry forward the ongoing negotiations towards a peaceful solution. The contours of a just solution were well known: the goal was to achieve, in a reasonable time frame, a sovereign, independent and viable Palestinian State, within well-defined and secure borders, living side by side and at peace with Israel. The international community should make renewed efforts to achieve such a solution, in line with the outcome of the Annapolis Conference. In that context, the Special Committee should be given a renewed mandate "in line with current realities".

20. **Ms. Khan** (Bangladesh) said that her delegation was deeply concerned at the continued sufferings of the Palestinian people under the illegal Israeli occupation. The Palestinians' fundamental rights to self-determination and a sovereign State remained unrealized and millions were living in poverty and despair. The ongoing restrictions on movement and access in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the continued construction of the separation wall and the expansion of Israeli settlements were worsening the humanitarian situation. There had also been a marked increase in the demolition of Palestinian homes in the past year.

21. Recent military operations, mostly targeted against civilians, had totally isolated the Gaza Strip from the outside world and had resulted in reoccupation of several parts of that area. There had been a heavy civilian death toll and emergency humanitarian assistance had been cut off. Palestinian settlements had been destroyed, families and communities had been split, and access to businesses, water, lands, employment and basic social services had been blocked. The situation in the occupied Syrian Golan was no better.

22. The situation in the occupied territories had deteriorated further in the past year in the face of relentless violence and destruction and the systematic violation of human rights and legal norms by Israeli forces. Her delegation strongly condemned Israeli military incursions, targeted assassinations and indiscriminate detention of Palestinians, and called on Israel to abide by the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. As the occupying Power, Israel had an obligation, confirmed by resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council, to respect the basic human rights of the Palestinian people.

23. She reiterated her delegation's concern at Israeli practices in the occupied territories and its unwavering support for the right of the Palestinian people to a sovereign and independent homeland. The road map drawn up by the Quartet held the key to a peaceful solution. Her delegation also endorsed the Special Committee's recommendations and called for their implementation. The construction of the wall should be stopped and the segments already built should be

dismantled. Moreover, Israel should withdraw all its forces from the occupied territories immediately.

24. **Mr. Elsherbini** (Egypt) said that his delegation had considered with growing sorrow the contents of the annual Report of the Special Committee regarding the constant grave violations by Israel, the occupying Power, of the human rights of the Palestinian people and the other Arabs of the occupied territories, violations that represented a grave breach of Israel's legal and moral commitments under international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and all related General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. Those violations also represented unprecedented defiance of the international community, which had repeatedly condemned them and demanded that they cease.

25. Moreover, Israel continued to refuse to allow the Special Committee to visit the occupied territories in order to investigate the human rights situation. However, Israel's attempts to cover up the truth had failed: the report of the Special Committee clearly revealed the scope of the hardship and the humanitarian disaster caused by the occupation and stood as a reminder to Israel of its commitments under the Charter. His delegation called on the General Assembly to endorse the report's recommendations and to support the mandate of the Special Committee by adopting the five draft resolutions introduced under the item, particularly in the light of the following considerations. First, the occupation itself was a violation of human rights, a violation aggravated by the unlawful practices and collective punishment imposed by Israel. Second, Israel continued systematically to violate all the basic human rights of the Palestinian people and to refuse any investigation of those violations.

26. Third, Israel continued to fail to respect the de jure and de facto applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan. Fourth, the acceleration of Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem and the related expansion of bypass roads and restrictions on movement were obvious violations of international law and had a negative impact on peace efforts and the possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian State, as did the escalating violence by settlers against civilian Palestinians and the failure of the Israeli occupying authority to stop such attacks and prosecute the perpetrators.

27. Fifth, Israel continued to build the separation wall in defiance of international law and the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. In that connection, his delegation urged that the Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall should be activated effectively and that Member States should be briefed periodically on its progress in compensating Palestinians. Sixth, Israel continued its illegal efforts to annex the occupied Syrian Golan and to alter its character and legal status, in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Egypt renewed its rejection of all Israeli measures and practices in the occupied Syrian Golan and its call for Israel's full withdrawal from all occupied Arab territories.

28. It was time for the international community to break its silence and work firmly to compel Israel to stop its violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories and comply with its commitments under international law, international humanitarian law and the United Nations Charter and resolutions. Immediate action by the General Assembly was needed in order to promote justice and avoid accusations of double standards and support for the aggressor.

29. **Mr. Al Shatti** (Kuwait) said that the plight of the Palestinian people had remained unresolved for more than half a century. Despite intensive international efforts to revive the peace process, the Israeli Government had failed to take serious confidence-building measures and instead was continuing its inhumane practices, including the excessive use of its military machine against unarmed Palestinians, large-scale destruction of homes and infrastructure, restrictions on movement, the expansion of settlements and the pursuit of a policy of siege and collective punishment. In addition, the continued construction of the separation wall, deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice in its 2004 advisory opinion, was damaging fertile land and water wells in the West Bank.

30. Israeli practices in the occupied territories represented a clear and direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. He called for the immediate cessation of military attacks against the Palestinian civilian population and reiterated his delegation's full support for the Palestinian people as they struggled to realize their legitimate rights, including the establishment of an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital. He called on the international community, in particular the Security Council, to halt

Israel's brutal practices by implementing the relevant resolutions and to adopt immediate measures for the protection of the civilian population. He also called for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of forces from the occupied Syrian Golan. The Israeli Government should cooperate with the Special Committee and implement the principle of land for peace. It should also accept the Arab Peace Initiative and abide by the road map in order to achieve a just and durable peace in the Middle East.

31. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the year 2008 marked the sixtieth anniversary not only of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone in the protection of humane values and human dignity, but also of the Nakba, a disgraceful symbol of the denial of the fundamental rights of a nation. The gross violations of human rights in the Palestinian and other Arab territories were caused primarily by the Israeli occupation and included killings, arbitrary detention, confiscation and destruction of property, disruption of economic activity, prevention of access to work, education and health care, and restrictions on freedom of movement.

32. According to the report of the Special Committee (A/63/273), the human rights situation had deteriorated further in the past year. The key priority was to end the occupation and ensure that the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under Israeli oppression could freely exercise their right of self-determination. Since its establishment in 1968, the Special Committee had been prevented by Israel from visiting the occupied territories. However, its findings, including those of its 2008 mission to Egypt, Jordan and the Syrian Arab Republic, made clear the impact of inhumane Israeli practices, especially on vulnerable people such as women, children and the elderly. The worsening humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip was of particular concern. In addition, the work of United Nations agencies and humanitarian workers in the occupied territories was being hindered increasingly. With respect to the occupied Syrian Golan, any action taken by the Israeli regime to alter the legal status and demographic character of the area was null and void.

33. The number of children killed in the occupied territories since the beginning of 2008 had already surpassed the number for the whole of 2007. In addition, the route of the separation wall, the steady expansion of settlements and the regime of curfews and closures had fragmented communities and seriously infringed on the right to freedom of movement and other rights of the Palestinian people. The lack of accountability for such violations was a matter of grave concern.

34. The international community had failed to address the Palestinian issue adequately. In particular, the Security Council's lack of action had diminished its credibility in that regard, and he endorsed the Special Committee's call for the Council to consider sanctions against Israel if the latter persisted in disregarding its international legal obligations. International public opinion had the power to exert pressure on the wrongdoer. It was therefore imperative to disseminate information on the situation in the occupied territories, especially the information contained in the Special Committee's report. All relevant organizations, including academic, diplomatic and research institutions and the media, should contribute to that effort. Access to first-hand information was crucial, and the Secretary-General should therefore take the necessary action to ensure that the Special Committee was able to undertake regular fact-finding missions to the occupied territories.

35. Peace and stability in the Middle East would be possible only through the full restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people, including the return of all refugees to their homeland and the establishment of a Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. He reiterated his Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle against the occupation.

36. **Mr. Yun** Yong Il (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that it was regrettable that the Middle East issue, originating with the Israeli occupation of the Arab territories remained unresolved. More than half of the Palestinian people had been forced to live as refugees, thousands of Palestinians were languishing in Israeli prisons and innocent civilians, including women and children, were being killed daily by Israel's brutal military campaigns. The Palestinian people were being denied their inalienable and fundamental rights, including their right to self-determination and return, and the right to work, education and health care. The separation wall and hundreds of checkpoints even deprived them of their right to freedom of movement. Indeed, Israel had transformed the Gaza Strip into a huge prison and continued to expand its settlements in Arab territories.

37. The international community could never dream of peace and security in the world without resolving the Middle East issue. The measures taken to date towards that end had not been translated into action, because certain countries tolerated Israel's occupation of Arab territories and its human rights violations and supported Israel politically, militarily and economically for their own interests in the Middle East. Those countries further urged the United Nations not to become a forum for condemning Israel's human rights violations. Resolving the Middle East issue as rapidly as possible was currently the foremost task facing the international community. Israel should immediately withdraw its troops from all the occupied Arab territories and provide compensation for the physical and mental damages it had caused the Arab people, including the Palestinians. His delegation reiterated its firm solidarity with the Palestinian people and their just struggle to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

38. **Mr. Alzaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that, despite the fact that the Special Committee had been barred from visiting the occupied territories, the report gave a clear picture of the widespread and systemic human rights abuses committed by Israel against the Palestinian and Arab populations in those territories. He strongly condemned those Israeli practices, reiterating his delegation's support for the renewal of the Special Committee's mandate until such time as the Israeli occupation had ended.

39. He called upon Member States to adopt all the recommendations contained in the report. Israel should recognize the de jure and de facto applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, end the closure of the Gaza Strip and cooperate with the Special Committee. He called upon the United Nations to take the measures required in order to protect and aid the Palestinian people until such time as they were able to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

40. *Mr. Elsherbini (Egypt), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

41. **Mr. Al-Shafi** (Qatar), after citing examples from the report of the suffering and injustice endured by the Palestinians as a result of the inhumane and illegal practices of Israel, said that the community of nations had failed to find an appropriate solution to the question of Palestine. The Security Council had also failed to fulfil its responsibilities in that regard, thereby diminishing its credibility.

42. As the occupying Power, Israel should end its grave human rights violations and illegal practices, including the collective punishment of the populations of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Condemning all forms of violence and provocations, he called upon the Security Council to urge all parties to exercise restraint and to advance negotiations aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable, comprehensive, just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

43. There would be no peace and stability in the Middle East unless all the Palestine refugees returned to their homeland within a reasonable time frame and established a sovereign, independent, democratic and viable contiguous State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Referring to paragraph 110 of the report (A/63/273), he reiterated the illegality of the decision by Israel to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan, and called upon Israel to comply with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

44. **Mr. Al-Allaf** (Jordan) said that the Palestinian people's humanitarian tragedy also affected the interests of all of the States involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to the report, Israeli policies and practices had continued and intensified, undermining the enjoyment of the right to self-determination by the Palestinian people, and consequently all other rights stipulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and core human rights treaties. Inasmuch as protection of human rights was vital to the success of peace efforts, the Israeli practices detailed in the report directly affected the credibility of those efforts.

45. All Israeli settlement activities, including the natural growth of existing settlements, particularly in East Jerusalem, should be stopped immediately. Such activities were intended to create new facts on the ground and were a clear violation of international law and United Nations resolutions. They also threatened the peace process as well as the possibility of the establishment of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State. Expressing great concern over the impact that the illegal separation wall had had on the daily lives of

the Palestinian people, he stressed that the construction of the wall ought to be viewed as a continuation of more than four decades of Israeli occupation.

46. Strict controls on the movement of persons and goods had caused a severe deterioration in the humanitarian situation; access to health care had been curtailed because of controls on the movement of ambulances and the delivery of essential medical supplies. Those controls would also have a long-term impact on the social fabric and threatened to destroy family ties as well as the Palestinians' link with their land. An elaborate system of permits, visas, checkpoints and the separation wall restricted access to holy places. Such measures were contrary to Israel's obligation under international law to ensure freedom of worship. His country also rejected all efforts to Judaize the Holy City of Jerusalem. The closure of the Gaza Strip had caused severe economic and psychological suffering and was a form of collective punishment, which was prohibited under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

47. Bringing about peace was not the responsibility of one party alone. In that connection, his delegation condemned the killing of civilians by both the Israelis and the Palestinians. All parties should respect the political process that had been launched at Annapolis and fulfil their obligations under the road map. Meanwhile, it was the responsibility of the community of nations to guide the parties towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict and the creation of a Palestinian State that lived side by side in peace and security with Israel.

48. *Mr. Argüello (Argentina) resumed the Chair.*

49. **Mr. Mansour** (Tunisia) said that the policies and practices of the Israeli authorities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory ran counter to all universal human rights principles and instruments and had created a multifaceted humanitarian crisis with grave consequences. The community of nations had been incapable of enforcing respect for those principles and instruments in the occupied Arab territories. Various diplomatic efforts, including the Annapolis process and the Arab Peace Initiative, had failed to change the situation on the ground. He reiterated his delegation's call for influential Member States to intervene immediately in order to halt Israeli policies and practices. The only way to put an end to the suffering of the Palestinian people was to seek a definitive solution to all aspects of the crisis. Such a solution should include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State and the return of all occupied Arab territories.

50. **Mr. Al-Bahi** (Sudan) said that the report marked yet another chapter in the decline of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip. The dire situation, however, had not thwarted the Palestinian people from demanding the exercise of their legitimate right to establish a Palestinian State, and they looked to the international community and the United Nations to compel Israel to fulfil its obligations under international law, the road map and the Annapolis process. It was important to renew the mandate of the Special Committee in view of the role it played in reminding the community of nations of its duty to protect the Palestinians living under occupation and to help them establish an independent State. Only a just and peaceful resolution of the question of Palestine, based on Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, would end their suffering and halt the Arab-Israeli conflict. In that connection, the fruitless search for a peaceful resolution over such a lengthy period of time reflected poorly on the United Nations.

51. **Mr. Al-Zayani** (Bahrain) said that, in addition to the Special Committee, other United Nations bodies and special rapporteurs had thoroughly documented Israel's gross violation of the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people and other Arabs of the occupied territories. All information, including eyewitness accounts, indicated that the repressive practices of the occupying Power had become harsher than ever. Moreover, Israel continued to blatantly defy all United Nations resolutions and to flout international law.

52. Peace was a strategic choice that required a change in the policies and practices that affected the daily lives of the Palestinians and the other Arabs of the occupied territories. In order to achieve just and comprehensive peace, it was imperative that Israel implement all United Nations resolutions, comply with all agreements and fulfil all of its obligations. The suffering of the Palestinians and other Arabs of the occupied territories would only increase as long as Israel continued to occupy their territories. Only full Israeli withdrawal would allow the Palestinian people to fully enjoy their human rights, including their inalienable right to self-determination, and to establish

an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

53. **Mr. Ali** (Malaysia) said that it was evident from the most recent report of the Special Committee that the appalling human rights situation of the Palestinians and the Syrians in the occupied territories not only had not improved, but had worsened. Indeed, the situation had deteriorated even more as a result of the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied territories, and intensification of settler attacks on Palestinians with the Israeli authorities standing idly by. Those settlements, encouraged and supported by the Israeli authorities, were in violation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and various agreements, including the one reached less than a year earlier at the Annapolis Conference. They also violated the Fourth Geneva Convention. The construction of the settlements must stop immediately and the land illegally confiscated be returned to its rightful owners.

54. To perpetuate those illegal settlements, Israel had constructed the separation wall, the impact of which, coupled with the regime of movement control, had been immense. It had isolated Palestinian communities and separated families, kept the Palestinians from their places of work and children from their schools and prevented farmers from accessing their land and water resources. Malaysia urged Israel to abide by the 2004 International Court of Justice ruling by halting the construction of the wall and dismantling it, and called on the international community to see that Israel did so.

55. His delegation was particularly concerned at Israeli human rights violations against young people and children. The long-term impact of those violations on the social fabric, on family ties and on the Palestinians' link to their land and environment would negatively affect Palestinian youths, who were the future of their people. The persistent pattern of wilful violations of international law and human rights abuses was not consonant with the stated intentions and the actions of a Government that was supposedly committed to achieving peace with Palestine and its Arab neighbours. Israel's attempt to change the character and demography of the occupied territories was becoming ever more evident. It must be made to cease its illegal actions and abide by the relevant international laws and conventions, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, as well as the relevant Security Council resolutions.

56. The Special Committee had been documenting Israeli violations of human rights in the occupied territories for over 40 years. The question currently confronting the international community was what to do next. Simple though that question seemed, answering it would require a large measure of sincerity, conviction, commitment and political will, particularly by Israel and those powerful and influential countries close to it. The world had seen the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map put forward by the Quartet either being stalled or pushed aside, all because those countries somehow felt that Israel had not been treated fairly, when the mountain of evidence clearly showed who the victim was and who the aggressor. It was absurd to ignore the plight of the Palestinians and Gazans who were being deprived of their rights and living in a situation of devastating hardship. Countries that prided themselves on respect for democracy and the rule of law and proudly claimed to champion human rights could not condone such a situation. Was it not wrong for any government to tear down family homes, to restrict people's access to food and water, to deny the sick adequate medical care and treatment and to prevent children from getting a well-rounded education?

57. The current year marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Nakba, the dispossession and uprooting of the Palestinian people from their homeland. It also marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but the celebration of the latter event was hollow as long as the Palestinians continued to live in destitution, deprived of their human rights. As members of the international community and supporters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, States must work towards the restoration of the human rights and dignity of the Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories. A just and lasting solution must be found through the realization of the two-State solution, including the establishment of the State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

58. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia) said it was regrettable that the Israeli Government had not answered the Special Committee's request for access to the occupied territories in order to prepare its report, nor replied to the notes verbales addressed to it by the Secretary-General. As in previous years, the report of the Special Committee confirmed the serious and worsening human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Golan as a result

of the Israeli occupation. Over the past year, the economic strangulation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory had intensified, leading to increasing dependency of the Palestinians on humanitarian aid. However, the humanitarian aid agencies were also suffering the impact of Israeli policies and actions, which was exacerbating the situation of ordinary Palestinians who depended on them.

59. Of equally great concern was Israel's continued construction of the separation wall in clear defiance of resolutions of the General Assembly and the 2004 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. That, coupled with the steady expansion of settlements and the imposition of curfews and closures, was having a devastating impact on Palestinian culture and livelihood and creating great human despondency. The situation was no better in the Syrian Golan.

60. He called upon the Government of Israel to match its proclamations about seeking peace with the Palestinians with the implementation of appropriate policies in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It should begin by honouring its obligations under the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council and must also comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Indonesia reaffirmed its support for a two-State solution that envisioned the creation of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State coexisting in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.